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NOTES AND DISCUSSION.

The Genesis of the so-called Septuagint, the First Greek Version of the Pentateuch.

Two opposite views have obtained currency as to the circumstances under which the Pentateuch was rendered into Greek. The theory generally adopted traces the origin of the Translation to the desire evinced by a Greek ruler of Egypt—one of the Ptolemies—to obtain for the Royal Library a copy in Greek of the Jewish Scriptures. This view rests on a narrative of one Aristeas, which has a spurious colour.

The author of Aristeas's Letter lived, as I have elsewhere proved, at the beginning of the first Christian century, under the Emperor Tiberius. His tale of a translation, done at the request of one of the Ptolemies, is embellished with legends and disfigured by anachronisms. Nevertheless, the kernel of his narrative is supposed to be historical, because it is supported by a tradition of the Alexandrian community. A Judæo-Alexandrian philosopher also relates, independently of Aristeas, that the day when the Translation was completed and solemnly handed to the king was commemorated by an annual festival in Alexandria. A Talmudical tradition also names a Ptolemy as the instigator of the Greek version of the Torah.

Others again deny that the version owed anything to royal favour, and ascribe its origin, instead, to the need the Alexandrian community, who were ignorant of Hebrew, felt to hear the Word of God in the vernacular. At the public reading of the Law it was customary to have the text rendered into the language of the people, verse by verse, by a competent interpreter. Thus the Translation was gradually evolved as the production of one or several Meturgemanim (interpreters).

This hypothesis derives support from the circumstance that we meet occasionally in the extant version with Hebrew terms, such as Pascha, Sabbath, etc., which would have sounded unfamiliar to a Greek king, and would not have been left untranslated in a version prepared for his use.

If, on the one hand, this argument is not absolutely decisive, neither, on the other, has royal interest in this work been proved by conclusive evidence. Scientifically, therefore, the Genesis of the Penta-teuch remains undetermined. Its style and literary character favours either theory equally. For the LXX. is admittedly on the whole a literal version. Every Hebrew word is rendered by its Greek equivalent. What deviations, additions, omissions, or other alterations do occur, form the subject of textual criticism or are obvious euphemistic turns of phrases, which, in their literal sense, were deemed derogatory to God. The literary colouring of the Version does not help us to solve the question.

An attempt has been made to prove that the LXX. was specially prepared for a king of the Lagide dynasty, from a rendering, pointed out in the Talmud, which, at first sight, does seem strange. In the list of animals, forbidden for food, אֲרֵנֶת is not translated *λαγώς* but *δασυπούς*. The Talmudic explanation has been adopted that the former term was purposely omitted, so as not to offend the first Macedonian King of Egypt, the son of Lagos. He would, naturally, feel affronted if he read his surname in the category of unclean beasts. Or, perhaps, as he claimed to be a natural son of Alexander the Great, the offence would have consisted in reminding him of his real father whom he wished to forget. At all events, whatever the precise *petra scandali* might have been, once admit that *dasypos* was used out of respect for a Lagide, and it naturally follows that the Translation was prepared for a sovereign of that family.

This reasoning fails, however, to stand the test of criticism. For *dasypos* and *lagos* are employed by Greek writers indifferently, with precisely the same connotation. The translator need not, therefore, have avoided the one term and selected the other out of deference to his sovereign; he might simply have been following the prevalent usage. Moreover, Aristéas's Letter says that the Version was prepared at the desire not of the first Lagide, Ptolemy Lagi, or Soter, as he is also called, but of his son, Philadelphus, to whom the line of argument, indicated above, would not apply. The Fathers of the Church, indeed, assume that the LXX. was prepared either for Ptolemy I. or for him and his successor. But that is a mere unsupported assumption, without a particle of proof. Aristéas's Letter only mentions Philadelphus as the patron of the Septuagint.

A remark of Origen, who dealt so thoroughly with this and all other Greek versions of the Scriptures, might, on a superficial examination, favour the supposition that it was prepared for a Lagide; or, at least, that deference was paid to a king in its preparation. In Ezekiel viii. 12 the first half of the verse is wanting in the LXX. Origen notes this omission with his usual asterisk, and adds the follow-

ing remark:—"The two words, 'The king will mourn,' may, perhaps, have been purposely omitted by the seventy translators, so that the king might not suspect them of suggesting that *he* would have occasion to mourn." This note assumes, then, that the translators expected that the king would read their Version or have it read to him. The main fact of Aristeas's Letter would thus be confirmed. But if an argument, *e silentio*, is never sufficient by itself, still less can it be relied on in this instance. Origen himself neutralises the force of his remark by adding that the phrase omitted by the translators may have been wanting in their copy of the Scriptures, though it is certainly required for the symmetry of the verse. The argument falls completely to the ground, when it is remembered that Ezekiel and the other prophetic and poetical books were translated much later than the Pentateuch, certainly not during the reign of the first sovereign of the Lagide dynasty.

And yet positive proof exists that the translator avoided the plain rendering and substituted another less likely to excite prejudice,—out of deference to a Greek ruler. In that portion of Deuteronomy (xvii. 14-19) which deals with the election of a ruler, the word מֶלֶךְ occurs three times. "When thou . . . shalt say, I will set a *King* over me, thou shalt set a *King* over thee; one from amongst thy brethren shalt thou set *King* over thee. Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee which is not thy brother." Here מֶלֶךְ is rendered, every time not βασιλεύς but ἄρχων. The sentence in v. 18, וַיֵּשֶׁב עָלָיו כִּסֵּא מַמְלָכָתוֹ, is rendered ὅταν καθίστη ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ—"when he sitteth upon his rulership," which, indeed, is bad Greek. Does not this avoidance of the terms connected with sovereignty look significant? The other translators, Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus are not afraid of rendering מֶלֶךְ simply βασιλεύς. The translator of the First Book of Samuel uses the word in the chapter which relates the story of Israel's agitation for a king. Only the translator of Deuteronomy seems to have avoided the term consciously. A delicacy of feeling prevented him rendering the sentence "thou shalt not appoint a stranger *King* over thee" literally, or mentioning the throne of his fatherland. How shall we account for this variation if we do not assume that the translator's respect for the foreign ruler to whose government the Jews were at the time subject, restrained him from letting the king read that, according to their Scriptures, the Jews were to select their ruler from their own body? And this is equivalent to the admission that the translation was prepared with special reference to a sovereign of Alexandria. It was assumed that he would glance at the version of Deuteronomy, as of the rest of the Pentateuch, and care

was therefore taken to omit phrases that might give umbrage. The pith of Aristeas's Letter would thus be confirmed, viz. :—that an Alexandrian King gave his countenance to a translation of the Pentateuch.

This being settled, the next problem that presents itself is the identification of the particular Ptolemy under whom the LXX. was prepared. It could not have been Ptolemy I., Soter; for though some of the Church Fathers give his name, not even a legend hints at his connection with the work. The second Ptolemy, Philadelphus, is named in Aristeas's Letter. But that letter is historically worthless. Its author hit on this king by chance, and, as it happens, guessed wrong. To lend plausibility to his guess, he introduces the figure of Demetrius Phalereus as having counselled Philadelphus to become the patron of the translation. He had heard of Demetrius as the author of a book on the Kings of Judea. He did not know, however, that this Demetrius was a Jew. Fancying him a Greek, the author of the letter identifies him with Demetrius Phalereus, an Archon of Athens; with equally wretched ignorance he styles him Ptolemy's librarian, and, as he was a contemporary of Philadelphus, credits him with having influenced that king to patronize the LXX. In truth, Demetrius Phalereus was in little favour with Philadelphus, who actually threw him into prison. In short, the writer of Aristeas's Letter had no authentic information of the connection of Philadelphus with the LXX. A false combination misled him. Philo and Josephus follow him blindly on this point. Apart from these authors, there is no evidence that Philadelphus took any interest whatever in Jews or Judaism. There is, however, historical evidence that Ptolemy VI., Philometor, felt and showed a deep interest in both. Without the misleading suggestion in Aristeas's Letter, his name would have naturally occurred to the student as the patron of the LXX. In order, however, to convert a probability into a certainty, we must resort to internal evidence.

One of the main differences that divided Sadducees and Pharisees turned on the date of the feast of Pentecost, and arose out of conflicting interpretations of a text. One of the laws of the festivals, in Leviticus, prescribes that the produce of the new harvest must not be used before a first-fruits offering of barley is brought. The time for bringing it is *ממחרת השבת* "on the morrow of the Sabbath." There is no hint of any connection between this offering and the Passover. But, as it is three times distinctly stated that a counting of days is to commence "on the morrow of the Sabbath," and to last for fifty days, at the end of which Pentecost is to be kept, that feast ought always to fall on a Sabbath. So the Sadducees, who supported the literal interpretation of Scripture, wished to

have it. The Pharisees interpreted this law differently. The counting, according to them, ought to begin on the second day of Passover, whatever day of the week that might be; and so Pentecost, too, could fall on any day of the week. They were forced to sacrifice the literal meaning of the phrase, מִמָּחֳרַת הַשַּׁבָּת, and explained it, "The morrow of the feast." How did the Greek Version render these two words? Decidedly in the Pharisee sense: τῆς ἑπαύριον τῆς πρώτης. Πρώτης here signifies the first day of the Feast of Passover; τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς πάσχεις is understood. Ἑπαύριον τῆς πρώτης is given by Origen as the genuine original reading. He remarks that another translator, keeping to the literal sense, rendered it ἑπαύριον τοῦ σαββάτου, or μετὰ τὸν σαββάτον. When in verse 15 the same phrase is rendered ἀπὸ τῆς ἑπαύριον τῶν σαββάτων, this must be an interpolation in the LXX. by ἄλλος. The original translator could not have been guilty of such gross inconsistency or thoughtlessness as this variation would imply. Josephus, it should further be noted, also gives the Law in the Pharisee sense. He refers to the first-fruit offering of barley, brought on the 16th of Nisan, and to Pentecost, fifty days after this date (*Antiqq.*, III. x. 5-6). Following the LXX., he did not read the word Sabbath יום המשיב תספרו השבת (Levit. xxiii. 16). The LXX. renders τῆς ἑπαύριον τῆς ἐσχάτης ἐβδομάδος ἀριθμήσετε πεντέκοντα ἡμέρας, also omitting the difficult word הַשַּׁבָּת.

If the LXX. had been prepared before the outbreak of the antagonism between the Sadducees and Pharisees the translator would have faithfully adhered to his text. His deviation from it proves that he was cognisant of the controversy, and consciously rendered his text in harmony with the teaching of the Pharisees. He omits the word שַׁבָּת, or, to be quite accurate, translates it, "The first day of the feast"; following the Talmudic interpretation, מִמָּחֳרַת יוֹם טוֹב.¹

¹ Compare *Sifrê* to Levit. xxiii. 14-16. What was the exact reason that impelled the Pharisees to place themselves in antagonism to the literal meaning of the text? It was a difficult matter for the bearers of the tradition to justify their interpretation (*Cf. Menachoth*, 66b); but it would seem that necessity was the ground for the course pursued. The feast of the Passover was coincident with the beginning of the barley-harvest, or rather was closely connected with it. If Passover fell on a Saturday or on an early day of the week, the use of the new crop would have been postponed for several days, if the offering—subsequent to which the barley became lawful for general use—could only be brought on the day after the actual Sabbath. The people may have occasionally felt the necessity of an immediate use of the new barley, owing to the older stores having run out. Must they be forced to endure the privation of food, and

When did this antagonism between Pharisaism and Sadduceism first break out? There is no trace of it before the Maccabean wars. Religious activity had, up to that time, nothing in common with politics. It pursued its course of development, unaggressive and unmolested. The Maccabean wars, undertaken with the object of winning national and political freedom, produced for the first time a fusion of religion and politics. Parties, half religious, half political, came into existence. The Sadducees, essentially politicians, and only half-converted Hellenists, wanted to gauge all religious obligations by the standard of political interests. They desired to remove all the checks which the prosperity and progress of the State sustained through the perpetuation of traditional customs. Their opponents, the Pharisees, clung firmly to every religious prescription that had once come into general use. They were convinced that the scrupulous observance of religious laws alone could further the welfare of the Jewish nation.

The two parties started from opposite points, and conceived the Maccabean success differently.

The Sadducees thought that the Maccabees had won their freedom by their military prowess, and the political sagacity of their leaders. The Pharisees believed that heaven had blessed their arms as a reward for their piety, and for their scrupulous observance of the affirmative and negative precepts of Judaism, which, therefore, should always be maintained. This was the pith of the opposition. So Josephus also says that the split between Pharisees and Sadducees arose in the days of Jonathan Maccabeus, *i.e.*, after liberty had been gained by that leader's warlike energy and political capacity. These opposite standpoints of regarding the Maccabean wars which then first came to light determined the methods recommended for securing the fruits of victory. The Pharisees maintained that freedom and national prosperity were bound up with the maintenance of all religious institutions, even those that are devoid of a Scriptural basis, provided they are sanctioned by tradition, *ἐκ πατέρων διαδοχῆς*. The Sadducees, on the contrary, denied the obligation of any institutes but those prescribed in the Written Law, *νόμῳ τὰ γεγραμμένα*.

To return from this digression to our own argument. This anti-

that, too, on a festival? To prevent this delay, the Pharisees may have adopted their interpretation of the text, in accordance with which the new crop was available on the second day of Passover. They had some support from the passage in Deuteronomy which prescribes that the counting of the seven weeks between Passover and Pentecost should begin with the inauguration of the harvest (Deut. xvi. 9, מִהַחֲלֵל חֶרְמֵשׁ, בקמה תחל לספר שבועה שבועות).

thesis of views involved in controversy the dates of the barley offering and of the feast of Pentecost that followed it after seven weeks. The Sadducees consistently held fast to the literal sense of the text *ממחרת השבת*; and, accordingly, maintained that the counting should begin "from the morrow of the first Sabbath" (after the Passover). The Pharisees, on the other hand, upheld the tradition, hitherto followed, that the first day of Passover determined the date for bringing the offering and that of Pentecost. The first translator of the Pentateuch into Greek, knowing of these divergent interpretations, modified his translation to suit the views of the Pharisees. Hence it may be reasonably inferred that this Version could not have been composed before Maccabean times, when the necessity for deviating from the text had not yet arisen. Nor yet could it have been prepared much later. For Sirach, who came to Egypt in the reign of Hyrcanus, already found a Greek Version of the Pentateuch and the Prophets. If we assume that the Five Books of Moses were translated about Jonathan's time (134-144 B.C.), that would correspond with the reign of Ptolemy Philometor. The Version exhibits traces of deference to a king. This sovereign can be no other than Philometor, who so highly favoured the Jews. Onias was his general, and helped to fight his brother. Philometor not only permitted him to build a temple in Egypt, but also assigned ground for the erection of a fortress in which Onias might maintain a garrison to defend the Sanctuary. He also made him Arabarch—*i. e.*, ruler over the district then called Arabia. Onias was, in a sense, a vassal of his monarch. His father was the last high priest of the old family Onias III., whose loyalty to religion brought him into conflict with the Hellenistic contemnners of the law. The son revered the Torah as much as the father. It was, therefore, quite in accordance with the fitness of things that his king should have shown so warm an interest in the Scriptures which the Jews cherished as to desire to read them in a Greek version. Equally natural is it that the translator should have carefully avoided all phrases that might cause the king to harbour doubts of the loyalty of his Jewish subjects, and should thus have substituted an alternative expression for *Βασιλεύς* (מֶלֶךְ) in his translation of the passage relating to the election of a king.

Thus the Septuagint itself proves that it owed its inception to the patronage of Philometor.

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